INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

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SUBJ: PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

REF: STATE 149111

1. PARA 1 OF REFTEL GENERALLY REFLECTS OUR CURRENT ASSESSMENT PRESIDENTIAL RACE. WE ALSO AGREE WITH PARA 2 ON US OBJECTIVES AND NECESSITY KEEPING OUR CHOICES OPEN, NO MATTER WHO MAY EVENTUALLY BECOME PRESIDENT.

2. OUR COMMENTS ON PROBLEMS OF PRESIDENTIAL RACE CONTAINED PARA . 3 ARE AS FOLLOWS.

A. AGREEMENT AMONG MILITARY ON SINGLE CANDIDATE. WE AGREE THERE SHOULD BE ONLY ONE MILITARY CANDIDATE, THAT THIS SELECTION SHOULD BE MADE BY ACCEPTALBE CONVENTIONAL POLITICAL MEANS, AND THAT US SHOULD NOT

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INTERVENE IN FAVOR EITHER CANDIDATE. AS NOTED SAIGON'S 15249 PRIME MINISTER KY IS ALREADY ON RECORD AS STATING THERE MUST BE ONLY ONE MILITARY CANDIDATE. CHIEF OF STATE THIEU REPORTEDLY TOLD PRESS SAME THING MARCH 10. WE BELIEVE THIS POINT FULLY RECOGNIZED BY MILITARY LEADERSHIP, INCLUDING THIEU AND KY. ALSO AS INDICATED SAIGON 16463, WE BELIEVE MILITARY LEADERSHIP UNDERSTANDS NECESSITY NOT SPLITTING MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT. NEVERTHELESS, IT MUST BE RECOGNIZED THAT STAKES OF PRESIDENTIAL RACE ARE EXTREMELY HIGH IN EYES OF VIETNAMESE, INCLUDING MILITARY, -AND THAT TEMPTATION TO OBTAIN NOMINATION AT ANY COST LIKELY TO BE GREAT AS WELL. WE WILL WATCH CLOSELY FOR

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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ANY SIGNS OF POLITICAL MANEUVERING WHICH COULD LEAD TO SPLIT IN ARMY AND WILL CONTINUE TO EMPHASIZE NECESSITY MAINTAINING MILITARY UNITY IN OUR TALKS WITH GENERALS, AS WE ARE ALREDY DOING. THERE ARE REPORTS THAT ARMED FORCES COUNCIL WILL MEET TO SELECT MILITARY CANDIDATE NEXT MONTH, PROBABLY AS SOON AS CONSTITUTION PROMULGATED. RELATED PROBLEM IS POST ELECTION TREATMENT AND

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ROLE OF PROSPECTIVE MILITARY CANDIDATE WHO DOES NOT GET BID (AND OF HIS SUPPORTERS), ASSUMING ACTUAL MILITARY CANDIDATE IS ELECTED. HERE AGAIN, WE BELIEVE MILITARY LEADERSHIP AWARE OF PROBLEM AND WILL SEEK SUITABLE POSITIONS FOR THOS MILITARY MEN WHO LOSE OUT IN BID FOR PRESIDENCY. SUCH ARRANGEMENTS WOULD PRESUMBLY BE PART OF PART OF DECISION ON SINGLE MILITARY CANDIDATE.

B. CIVILIAN PARTICIPATION ON MILITARY TICKET, WE CONCUR THAT PROMINENT, ATTRACTIVE CIVILIAN HIGHLY DESIREBLE AS VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. MILITARY CNADIDATES ALSO HAVE THIS VERY MUCH IN MIND, AND, AS WE HAVE REPORTED, ARE IN TOUCH WITH VARIOUS LEADING CIVILIAN POLITICAL FIGURES. WE BELIEVE, MOREOVER, THAT DURING CAMPAIGN MILITARY CANDIDATE SHOULD STRESS IDEA OF NEW GOVENMENT AS TEAN, NOT MERELY ONE OR TWO FIGURES. GIVEN INHERENT WEAKENSS OF VICE PRESIDENCY UNDER NEW CONSTITUTION, WE BELIEVE MILITARY CANDIDATE SHOULD ANNOUNCE HIS INTENTION NAME PROMINENT, COMPETENT CIVLIANS WITH PROPER REGIONAL AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUNDS TO CERTAIN CABINET POSTS, THAT OF PRIME MINISTER.

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IN SOME CASES HE MIGHT BE IN POSITION LET NAMES OF SOME PROPSECTIVE CABINET MEMBERS BE KNOWN IN ADVANCE.

C. MILITARY PARTICIPATION ON CIVILIAN TICKET.
CONCUR AND BELIEVE PROSPECTIVE CIVLIAN CANDIDATES UNDERSTAND THIS POINT.

D. NAMING OF PROSPECTIVE PRIME MINISTER.
IDENTITY OF PROSPECTIVE PRIME MINISTERS WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY BE REVEALED DURING CAMPAIGN IN ORDER MAXIMIZE REGIONAL AND RELIGIOUS APPEAL OF PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES. WE FAVOR THIS.

GP-1. LODGE
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